



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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Hansard 21 August 2002

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): The purpose of the Local Government Amendment Bill 2002 is to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to achieve a number of reforms in the area of local government electoral arrangements. The bill establishes a new procedure for initiating the review of internal local government electoral boundaries. Secondly, the bill changes several local government electoral procedures to facilitate the effective conduct of local government elections. An evaluation of the workability of the LGA's electoral provisions was commenced following the 2000 local government elections. Following a period of public consultation and assessment of issues raised during consultation, a number of proposals were developed in the form of legislative amendments.

At this point I mention, and applaud, two consultation processes being facilitated on the Sunshine Coast by the Maroochy Shire Council and the Caloundra City Council respectively. The Maroochy Shire Council is considering amending the present situation that faces Maroochy residents at council election time where, due to one division which has two councillors, a first past the post result decides all councillor positions, including the position of mayor. At this point I seek leave to table relevant documents, including a fact sheet, in relation to that.

In regard to the Maroochy council fact sheet, I applaud the consultation process. However, we were given only two options. One was first past the post and the other was optional preferential. In all sincerity, I question the member for Callide's opinion on boundaries without divisions. The council has up to 13 councillors who represent the whole of the city. Unfortunately, in Maroochy council there is a 6:7 split and some areas miss out because they are not 'on the in'. Parochialism has gone to a level of tribalism and the people suffer.

The Buderim War Memorial Community Association wrote to me and said that it would be most appreciative if I could lend my support in whatever way possible to ensure that a certain roundabout is constructed, thereby ensuring safer conditions for the residents of Buderim. Unfortunately, in its last budget the council did not fund the construction of a roundabout approved as part of an agreement for the establishment of a Woolworths supermarket at Buderim. I applaud Robert Armstrong, president of the Buderim War Memorial Community Association; Anne Moorhouse, who wrote to me; and Ken O'Flaherty of the *Buderim Chronicle*, the local paper. It should be referred to as the Buderim bible because it is a great community newspaper. They are trying to push this issue and influence the council to ensure that this piece of vital infrastructure is built. I will also table a letter that Robert Armstrong wrote to Mayor Grosse, the first paragraph of which states—

As an association with 62 affiliated groups and 10 subcommittees, the Buderim War Memorial Community Association depicts a fair cross section of the residents of Buderim. As their representative the BWMCA must strongly protest the omission from council's 2002-03 budget of the proposed roundabout...

This association would cover the majority of families and people who live and reside in Buderim and surrounds. There is a very strong sentiment of disappointment towards the council—and 'disappointment' is probably not a strong enough word. There was going to be a sit-down protest in the main street, but it actually became a march through the street. When the Police Minister was in my electorate last week I asked him, senior police and the commissioner to acknowledge that there will be some real issues because what the council has done is really wrong. At the next quarterly budget review, which I think will be in September, they should find the money to build that vital piece of infrastructure.

The Caloundra City Council is also undergoing a review of the whole structure, both of staff and councillors. I applaud Mayor Don Aldous, whom I will be meeting today when I lead a delegation to ministers, and the majority of his councillors. They are looking at whether they can restructure the council. In 1997 I was on the council when it underwent a restructure. Five years down the track, it is having another look to see whether it can save ratepayer funds. That is a very positive way of going about it. I implore the mayor to consider reducing the number of councillors. There are 10 councillors and the mayor. I was formerly a councillor on that council and I understand their workload. I think they should be looking at reviewing the boundaries and reducing the number of councillors to six, plus the mayor. I believe that would do away with a lot of the parochialism and tribalism. Following the budget brought down by the Caloundra City Council, the Kawana councillors called a public meeting and said that they got nothing. Unfortunately, if they are not going to work as a team they will get nothing. A council covering the whole city would be far better.

In touching on the Caloundra City Council, I mention also that I will be calling on the mayor of the Caloundra City Council to rectify a very serious issue that has residents in my electorate concerned, and that is property encroachments. On 10 October 2000, the Department of Natural Resources wrote to people stating that it was working with the council and that the council has written to local residents advising them of their responsibilities in respect of the preferred native species planted in dunal areas along the beaches of Warana and Bokarina—and I have raised this issue in the House before—

the control of weeds and the encroachment of adjacent landowners onto ... public land. Recent Council media releases acquainting the general public with the Plan indicate that Council propose action under a local law should encroaching property owners ignore the letter.

That was two years ago. I will table a number of photographs and also a letter dated 31 July from the chief executive officer. It states—

If your backyard ... extends beyond your property boundary and onto public land you will be required to remove/restore it. You should be aware that such encroachments are in breach of Council local law 10 and will result in fines ...

It also goes on to mention firebreaks.

A letter to John Parnis, Senior Land Officer, State Land Asset Management, Nambour, Department of Natural Resources, reflects badly on the council. It states—

Given our experience with the Caloundra City Council in recent weeks where our local councillor has overridden a decision of a senior council officer deputised by the CEO to make the decision concerning BPA land for what only can be considered political reasons, we hold little hope that there will be any action on, let alone the removal of, this recent encroachment. It is for this reason that we are asking your department to investigate the said encroachment.

I will table the photos, which clearly show that the councillor is the one who has 20-year old encroachments. He stopped the process that should have proceeded. He said to the press when they went out to interview him, 'Why didn't Cummins do anything about it when he was a councillor?' I started the process and now it has stopped. The residents do not believe elected representatives are above the law. The encroachments should be removed, as should all encroachments of any members of the public along that area. I table the photos. I encourage the mayor and the entire Caloundra City Council to pick up their act and get on top of these encroachments, because the people within my electorate are not very happy about it at all. I commend the bill to the House.

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